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HINDU SOCIAL REFORM

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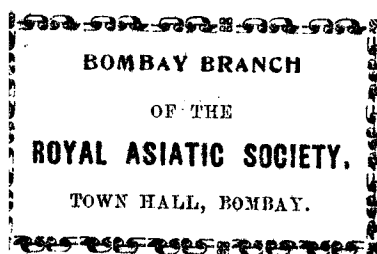
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E.B.R.A.S.



HINDU SOCIAL REFORM

A Reprint of two Letters addressed to the
‘Times of India’ and the ‘Indian
Spectator’ in reply to Mr. Telang;

WITH A POSTSCRIPT;

Bombay:

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THE man who is especially preoccupied with the duties of public life, does not readily forgive those who attach little importance to his party quarrels. He especially blames those who subordinate political to social questions, and profess a sort of indifference for the former. In one sense he is right, for exclusive power is prejudicial to the good government of human affairs. But what progress have "parties" been able to effect in the general morality of our species? If Jesus, instead of founding His heavenly kingdom, had gone to Rome, had expended His energies in conspiring against Tiberius, or in regretting Germanicus, what would have become of the world? As an austere republican, or zealous patriot, He would not have arrested the great current of the affairs of His age, but in declaring that politics are insignificant, He has revealed to the world this truth, that one country is not everything, and that the man is before, and higher than, the citizen.—*E. Renan, Life of Jesus, English Translation, 1871.*

FAITH is the watchword of all popular movements. It is clear that none of these movements would take place if it were necessary that their author should gain his disciples one by one by force of logic. Reflection leads only to doubt. If the authors of the French Revolution, for instance, had had to be previously convinced by lengthened meditations, they would all have become old without accomplishing anything. Jesus, in like manner, aimed less at convincing His hearers than at exciting their enthusiasm. Urgent and imperative, He suffered no opposition: men must be converted, nothing less would satisfy Him.—*Ibid.*



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PREFACE.

THE surest foundation of the greatness of a nation rests on the purity and the soundness of its social system. Thoroughly convinced of the truth of this proposition, and firmly holding that the great defects in the social system of the Hindus have arrested during a thousand years or more the Political and all other kind of advancement of a country that was once the cradle of all science and art, I have pretty carefully studied the exciting but interesting controversy on Social Reform to which a couple of years ago Mr. Malabari's "crusade" gave birth. I have observed that even on the part of our most highly cultivated countrymen there is the same eternal tendency to talk and write that there was a quarter of a century ago, but of solid work, as the result of their eloquent preaching, we see fewer instances on their part than the former generation of Hindus, not half so well educated, could show. Even reactionary views are now boldly taught by men from whom we might have expected far different things. We are told that Social Reform is an impossibility without collective action, that the custom of exclud-

ing woman from society need not be interfered with; that the prohibition of widow marriage should be left as it is; that infant marriage is a custom the blessings of which preponderate over its evils. When we find accomplished scholars and highly respected leaders of society holding such views, the blow dealt to Social Reform must be very serious indeed. Into this Controversy, however, I had had no intention of thrusting myself, until the publication of Mr. Telang's Lecture on Social *vs.* Political Reform, which I thought contained conclusions almost absolutely unsupported by history, compelled me to break my silence. Mr. Telang's Lecture having been republished in pamphlet form for the benefit of a wider circle of readers, I also have been advised, on public grounds, to collect my letters in the same way.

Having only lately seen Mr. Telang's pamphlet, with the additional introductory note, I have taken the liberty of appending a postscript to this brochure noticing one or two important arguments contained in Mr. Telang's note.

R. N. CHHOY.

SAYADPURA GATE, SURAT,

25th June 1886.

Times of India, March 13th, 1886.

HINDU REFORM.

To

THE EDITOR

OF THE "TIMES OF INDIA."

SIR,

I imagine that no native listens to or reads Mr. Telang's speeches without feeling a very natural pride that Native India should have produced such a scholar and such an orator as any assembly of Englishmen would think it an honour to call their own. Mr. Telang's command of the English language and his extensive reading in literature conclusively prove, as many other men have proved, what Natives of India are capable of achieving under conditions by no means so favourable as those under which the more fortunate European students work. With this candid preface I will at once address myself to the task which I have imposed upon myself, namely, to criticize the facts and views advanced by Mr. Telang in his much-discussed "Inquiry whether Social Reform should precede Political Reform." The reaction against any previous sincere conviction with regard to the necessity of a radical reform in

the baneful custom of enforced widowhood and infant marriage, which Mr. Telang's inquiry, combined with the Hon. Rao Saheb Mandlik's memorable letter to Government on the question of Social Reform, has created in the minds of the reading Hindu public in the mofussil, would be simply incredible to Englishmen without personal experience; and it is for this, if for nothing else, the warmest admirer of Mr. Telang cannot help regretting that he should not have paused to consider what the general effect would be if such views as those to which he has treated us, in his best style, were proclaimed on his high authority. He had the example of the effect produced upon the Hindu community by perhaps the most unsatisfactory letter, that his friend, the Rao Saheb, had ever written, and this example should have warned him, if he was a sincere friend of Social Reform, to deny us even the great pleasure which, considered merely as a literary effort, his speech undoubtedly gave us to hear or to read. The instances from English and Indian history which Mr. Telang cited in his inquiry to support his conclusion that social and political reform should go hand in hand are plausible, but not perfectly appropriate. I am surprised that neither Mr. Modak nor Dr. Kirtikar, who took part in the discussion of the subject at the second meeting at the Framjee Cowasjee Institute, should have made no serious effort to point out at length the weakness of Mr. Telang's illustrations, but should have contented

themselves with the bare assertion that those illustrations of his were not quite happy.

Mr. Telang talks of the brilliant political achievements of Sivaji and the Peishwas, and assures us that those achievements were political progress. I hardly understand from this what the learned lecturer meant by political progress as achieved by the Marathas. We all know that common oppressions and common danger united the Maratha community under a great leader—Sivaji—to throw off the galling yoke of the great Aurangzeb, and that in this they completely succeeded after the death of that potentate, when the Mogul Empire was fast going to ruin in the way in which all Eastern empires have gone. In the scramble that followed the Marathas bid fair to become the undisputed masters of India, when the terrible hand of Muhammad Shah Abdali gave a blow to their power which put an end to all their hopes of dominion over entire India. We further know that half a century later the genius of Wellesley completely brought to the dust the Maratha princes, and asserted the supremacy of a more hardy, a more united, and a more civilized foreign race. I must, however, have deplorably misread Indian history if I am wrong in denying that Maratha society as a whole made any political progress in the more general sense of the word. The chiefs of the race were perfectly despotic. They were the sole masters of the lives and properties of their subjects. Their will was law; and

from it there could be no appeal. There was absolutely no check upon the most capricious acts of the chiefs, there was not a phantom of direct or indirect representation. The security which Maratha society as a whole could enjoy was derived from the virtues or the self-restraint of individual rulers. But in all this, with due deference for Mr. Telang's authority, the Maratha subjects did not differ from the subjects under other rulers in other parts of India. If Maratha society could boast of no such political progress, then I am at a loss to know what is Mr. Telang's idea of political progress as ascribed to the Maratha race. It is at least certain that, speaking of England, he means by that phrase something very different,—its popular meaning. It seems to me that Mr. Telang has been hampered in his whole argument. If it is valid, if the least-line-of-resistance argument is valid, if we concede—an impossible concession in my opinion—that there was brilliant political progress, in the popular sense, achieved by Maratha society—though the social condition of the people was, on Mr. Telang's own admission, at least as bad as now—then, by all the rules of logic, Mr. Telang was bound to have come to the conclusion, and should have boldly avowed it, that social degradation was perfectly compatible with political progress—that social reform should be left to take care of itself before achieving high political progress. He should have maintained that the men who, like Malabari, Raghoonath Rao,

and Ranade, devote themselves to social reform, would materially strengthen his hands and those of his fellow-workers in the political direction if they gave up their cause in favour of politics. That the country thereby would the sooner achieve the political goal and would be in a better position after that to take up the question of social reform and solve it more speedily than it would otherwise have done, since the influence upon their countrymen achieved by the leaders in political, would tell upon the people in social, reform, which Mr. Telang and his friends do not lightly regard.

Again, the illustrations which Mr. Telang has sought out from English history to prove his point are most unhappily chosen. They prove nothing. There are epochs, as Macaulay himself says, in the history of even the most enlightened countries, when we see a decline—a retrogression—a change from what is good to what is bad, either socially or politically. Such an epoch commenced with the restoration of the Stuart dynasty which brought with it everything that was frivolous, everything that was morally unsound, in the French Court, French manners in the upper classes, and French literature of the period. In consequence, the English Court, the English upper classes, and to a certain extent even the middle classes, became corrupted. Literature itself took the infection. In fact, a very strong reaction took place after the austerities which Puritanism had most unwisely enforced. Immorality spread far and

wide in public life and in private life. Virtue itself was ridiculed. The worst effects were to be seen about the accession of James II. the period which Mr. Telang has selected to strengthen his argument. The most servile parliament that the Stuarts had ever seen was elected in the first year of James II. But this ebb in the social and political life of the English nation was one of the accidents of history, which Macaulay—Mr. Telang's favourite author—most clearly explains in his Essays on Hallam's great work and Sir James Mackintosh's History of the Revolution. I therefore cannot understand why Mr. Telang should have chosen this period, and ignored perhaps the brightest page in English history—the period when the good effects of the Great Reformation began to be felt in almost every section of English society—the period when Puritanism became a tremendous force which pulled down King and Lords and asserted the supremacy of the people. It was Puritanism, in its wide sense—the moral force, in other words, given to English society when the Reformation had been allowed sufficient time to bear fruit—that created a Hampden and a Pym and a Cromwell. It was this Puritanism which made England really a great power with which no foreign potentate could trifle. It was this force with which the Great Protector made the name of Englishmen as much respected among foreign nations as had been that of a Roman. The period of indecency and laxity of principle which followed the Restoration was, as I

have said, one of the accidents in the history of the nation. And yet the credit of the glorious Revolution and other measures which culminated with the Act of Settlement did not, on Macaulay's own showing, belong to the loose-principled Sunderland, Rochester, Halifax and Churchill, or any of the other statesmen of the time. The true glory belongs to William III., without whose forces the Revolution could not be achieved.

Having shown the inaccuracy and the irrelevancy of Mr. Telang's historical illustrations, I now come to examine his views with respect to the degree of attention which social reform under its present state demands at the hands of Hindu leaders, and to point out what seems to me to be the true remedy of the social evils.

If autocratic Englishmen err, and very naturally err, in asking us to devote our might and main to reforming ourselves before even thinking of reforming the Government, Mr. Telang and men of his way of thinking, who have devoted their lives to politics, do not the less err in the opposite direction when they insist upon political progress as an effective instrument with which to regenerate society. An unsatisfactory social condition there will always be in every community. An unsatisfactory political condition also there always will be everywhere. We cannot define what is a satisfactory condition, whether political or social. The standard of one man is different from the standard of another. When Mr.

Telang says that England has achieved a brilliant progress in politics, he only speaks by comparison. England has not attained to a political ideal, as Mr. Telang knows, and as his favourite author, Herbert Spencer, always insists. Nor must it be forgotten that a good many of the evils in English society are the result of a want of sufficient political progress—that in fact they are most closely connected with politics. Again, it is the very law of progress that, in the exact proportion in which advancement has been made, there should be dissatisfaction with the present state of things and an aiming at a higher standard. But, after all, it is not by taking a leaf from Macaulay's history here, a leaf from Herbert Spencer's works there, or a leaf from contemporary history, and showing that evils in society do exist with much political progress, that all social evils—Indian included—can be satisfactorily explained away or excused. Evils there will always be. But the main thing to be considered always is, their magnitude and their effects upon society. Let Mr. Telang solve this problem. Why has India remained subjugated during centuries to the foreigner? Had she always been a barbarous country? Had she no philosophy, no poetry of her own? Had she never known a pure religion? Why did Maratha society, which Mr. Telang assures us had done wonders in politics without being better socially than it is—why did it, with all other Indian societies, succumb to the genius of an utterly foreign race, as rapidly as it had

risen? Mr. Telang, I am sure, will be the last man to plead an unphilosophical reason, that it was the destiny of God that it should be so—that, in fact, all human institutions should decay. Such an answer would be simply begging the question.

If autocratic Englishmen advise us to reform our social system, that advice, it is true, has been inspired by more or less selfish motives. It is true that they want to retain political power in their own hands as long as possible. But this does not prove that the advice in itself is utterly wrong. And in justice one must acknowledge that the reason why we natives with very rare exceptions do not take kindly to reform in a practical sense is, that politics bring no trouble upon us—rather the contrary,—but that by advocating and practising reform we have much to lose and suffer—friendship, social excommunication, and a hundred kindred evils. Of course, one section of natives are ready to declaim against the social evils of Enforced Widowhood and Infant Marriage; but the talk ends where it began. They expect the masses to make a move all together and at the same time, for the purpose of putting the doctrines of the preachers into force; and then our reformers are quite ready to follow the masses. But this cannot properly be the stuff of which social or political reformers are made. Such men, with all their education, with all their natural gifts, can never be the leading members of a great, of an independent nation.

Another section of Native gentlemen, acknowledging the social evils, are ever ready with "prudent" arguments, and quotations from English writers or philosophers. (I sincerely assure Mr. Telang that I have no wish to speak, I have no heart to speak, disrespectfully of him at any rate.) These men will argue that the evils are the result of a thousand years of priestcraft and ignorance. They are incurable. Drastic measures won't do. They should be left to education, to female education, to be reformed in course of time. We should mind political progress. If we took any violent steps, we should produce a strong reaction in the minds of the community. And all the rest in the same strain. There is, perhaps, no cause so bad that arguments cannot be found to justify it. *But I solemnly declare from personal experience that half a dozen of these friends of reform, especially if they be men of light and leading in the community, do, by their "prudent" counsels, far more to retard it than a hundred begging Brahmins are able to do.* It has always struck me as a curious fact that for one gentleman who shows his courage in putting his talk of reform into force, there should be twenty obscure, unknown, illiterate men who have the courage to do what many loud-preaching public men do not do. Enthusiasm and martyrdom are necessary for the regeneration of every particular society. They are the more necessary when social evils of acknowledgedly great magnitude sap the very foundations of that society,

as in our case. When the race can produce leaders who only talk of prudence and quote authors, without having the courage to put their doctrines into practice, that race is past all hope. It can never achieve independence. It must ever remain in servility to one foreign master or another. How was the Reformation, or the Great Emancipation of the human intellect, brought out in Europe?

✓ Did Luther and Calvin and their followers talk of prudence, of the efficacy of education, of the deep-rooted prejudices of a thousand years, of priestcraft and popery? If these reformers, unenlightened by the science and philosophy of modern Europe, and so far more unfavourably situated than our educated Hindu reformers, had waited till education had leavened the masses, then they would have waited till perhaps three or four centuries. Remember what great difficulties lay in their way, how they were prepared to overcome them even at the cost of their lives. Those were the times of the Inquisition, of burnings and hangings of thousands of heretics. And yet they overcame all these difficulties. Those that lie in the way of Hindu reformers, if only they are sincere in their professions, are as nothing compared with those that beset the Europeans on the Continent in the 16th century. We have a strong Government over us, and not a hair of our head can be touched with impunity by any of our bitterest opponents. All that is required of our reformers is practical work, after hundreds of

thousands of newspaper articles, pamphlets, and lectures. Reform should begin at home, and every concrete instance of the courage of our opinions will silently prove more eloquent than a hundred speeches by even a Telang or a Mandlik, in his best form. The evils in the social system of the Hindus are perhaps unparalleled in all history—those that necessitated the European Reformation were not to be compared with the evils that India has been suffering from during a thousand years and more. Yet how fortunately we are situated to achieve a radical cure! A powerful, a sympathizing and an enlightened Government is ready to protect us, ready to lend a helping hand, if only we show by our acts that we are sincere and true in our work.

One curious view in Mr. Telang's speech I cannot help referring to. It is noteworthy that Mr. Telang, who under the British Government assures us that social reform can be achieved only by general education, should in the same breath tell us that if only the Empire of the Peishwas had lasted a little longer, the social system of the Hindus would have been immeasurably improved without the necessity of any education. So, at least, I understand to be Mr. Telang's meaning, unless Mr. Telang prove to me from the *Bakhars*, which I have not seen, that there was any system of general education, female education and all, included.

But it is now time to conclude. A nation that is morally low, a nation that boasts of talking and

speculating dreamers who live upon the glories of the past—not their own—and who lack the essential courage of manhood in not being ready to suffer all for the sake of putting their doctrines into practice, and leading the way for the emancipation of their race from the enervating customs of a thousand years of ignorance and priestcraft—such a nation can never be politically great. History, I repeat, affords no instance of a great nation bowed down by such degrading superstitions and such social thralldom as India has been groaning under. Let our reformers engrave upon their hearts the words of the immortal Burke in his speech on the American Taxation :—“ The question with me is not whether you have a right to render your people miserable, but whether it is not your interest to make them happy. It is not what a lawyer tells me I may do, but what humanity, reason, and justice tell me I ought to do.”—Yours, &c.,

R. N. CHHOY.

SAYADPURA GATE, SURAT,

March 11.

Indian Spectator, June 6th, 1886

TO THE EDITOR.

SIR,

In my letter to the *Times of India* of the 13th March, to which Mr. Telang has not thought fit to make a reply, I have, besides other things, pointed out at great length the astounding irrelevancies of the chief historical illustrations which that gentleman had advanced in his famous Inquiry, whether Social Reform should precede Political Reform. It is the object of the present letter to carry the examination of Mr. Telang's speech further:

To judge from the alarm and the excitement which have been created among the higher classes of educated natives, owing to the advice which Sir Auckland Colvin and others, and one or two native gentlemen of note, have given them, to the effect that they should devote their especial attention to Social Reform, one would think that the British Government had secretly or otherwise intimated to our public men that they should wash their hands of politics altogether, and think first of reforming their social system. I hardly need tell you that I have never been able to share this alarm and this excitement with our educated brethren. The number of even pronounced Anglo-Indians or of natives of any account must be exceedingly limited, indeed,

who seriously think that because, as you hold and as I hold, without a radical reform in our society our nation can never achieve real political greatness, politics might with advantage to the country be altogether abandoned by us. The opinions of this small number of men never required to be seriously refuted, as is being done in your city, for example. But the pains which men of position like Messrs. Mandlik, Wordsworth, Telang and Chandavarkar have taken to refute these opinions have had one effect, in the mofussil at any rate. A reaction against the conviction of the necessity of Social Reform has taken place in the minds of the Hindu community, possibly because the utterances of these gentlemen have not been exactly understood. And it was with the object of, if possible, counteracting this reaction that, in the absence of an abler man, I took the field, and disputed the appropriateness, as well as the interpretation itself of Mr. Telang's historical instances, and pointed out the necessity of devoting far more *practical* attention to Social Reform than has been paid to it hitherto, maintaining also that the instruments with which Mr. Telang hopes to achieve Social Reform are very little effective. My differences with Mr. Telang are serious indeed, but that is not because we disagree with each other in assigning precedence to one kind of reform over another, but because I think Mr. Telang to be wrong in holding that if we go on at this rate in politics and in practical Social Reform, our country

would be as well off in the long run as one might desire. Without holding, as Mr. Telang seems to me to hold, that it is a universal principle established by history that Political and Social Reform should go hand in hand, I am free to agree with him that in the peculiar situation in which our country has been placed and governed, as we are governed, by a progressive nation, it would neither be possible, nor even desirable, in the general interests of our country, that political agitation should be abandoned altogether in favour of Social Reform. But I shall presently adduce historical instances which will prove that, far from Mr. Telang's proposition being universal, political changes have very often been the result of great social changes.

Lord Macaulay's favourite view, that the Tudors were not really a despotic dynasty, has been most successfully disputed by many of the recent historians, including Mr. Froude and the late lamented Mr. John Richard Green, of world-wide renown (in his "Short history of the English people.") The destruction of the Constitutional freedom of England, we are told, was industriously begun by crafty old Henry VII., the first Tudor, and carried out with remorseless rigour by pious Henry VIII., the second of that line. At the bidding of this ruthless despot the unscrupulous Council of the boy Edward, of the "Bloody" Mary, and of that "Imperial Bioness," one of the shrewdest and most statesmanlike of all the monarchs of Europe, Elizabeth, even the brave

English people were obliged to change and re-change and change over again their form of religion. Tudor despotism was almost complete in every sense. England had been made to take a great backward step in politics. She had to lose all the cherished privileges which she had extorted or got confirmed from almost all the successive Princes that reigned from the time of John downwards. Parliament was, indeed, called, but that was only to register the decrees of the despot, and thus to sanctify with their legal sanction what was injustice or robbery or murder. And all over the Continent also the liberties of nations had been trampled under foot, and were a thing of the past. And yet even amidst political degradation, amidst despotism, nay, by means of despotism, were sown the seeds of a Reformation which eventually bore fruit in the Emancipation of the Human Intellect, and which gave nations a truer idea of their rights as against the Divine Right of kings to govern wrong, and which not long after, in one country at least, shattered that Divine Right to pieces, never perhaps to rise again. Puritanism gave England the Long Parliament, which men will never forget as long as Freedom exists in any quarter of the globe. Puritanism produced Cromwell, who made England great and respected. Puritanism conceived advanced ideas of political equality which were carried out only two centuries later, in the Reform Bill of 1832. When the Reformation commenced, the New Learning had

not made giant strides among the masses of Europe. The devotees of that learning could be counted at best by a few thousand. The masses were as innocent of the Alphabet of their own unrefined tongues as is the Bombay Cooli or Ghati of his. They had heard of only one book, the Bible,—which was their Bacon and Macaulay and Mill and Bentham and Spencer and Bain, all in one. Such pioneers and leaders of the New Learning as Sir Thomas More and Erasmus were to be found, not in the ranks of the Reformers, but of the Catholics. Thus, in several parts of Europe, even in spite of the opposition of some of the learned, in spite of the Inquisition, of wars and massacres, of wholesale burnings and hangings of men, women, and children, Protestantism triumphed. This triumph of Protestantism, which meant the ultimate emancipation of the Human Intellect, was perhaps the grandest event in the history of man since the rise of Christianity. Mr. Telang no doubt knows that this Reformation of religion was brought about neither by the instrumentality of education nor of Political Progress. Far from these being the instruments, they were the result of the Reformation. The instruments which achieved the Great Change were the sound and stern hearts of men who never flinched before fire and sword when once they were convinced of Truth. These men were often destitute of any learning—they were perfectly innocent of the theories of the modern educated Hindu. If at times they held the

lives of their fellow-creatures cheap, it was not that they themselves in their adversity feared to lay down their own in the cause of truth. Selfishness was not in them, nor the fear of man. It was the love of worship after their own heart, which was denied to them by the land of their fathers, that drove the first little band of Puritans whom history has immortalized as the Pilgrim Fathers, to desert their homes for forests over the sea which are now among the most fertile and the most civilized principalities in the world. The inheritance which they took away with them from the land of their birth was nothing, says Macaulay or Green, I forget which—but the honest English heart and the stubborn English courage and resolution. The seeds of the great American Republic were here sown by a band of men who were in every sense workers, and in no sense theorizers. The effects of the Reformation are yet destined to be felt down to remote ages.

Before Muhammad was born, Arabia had been in a rude state from time immemorial, and had been divided by internal dissensions owing to the innumerable divisions of the people into tribes or castes. The social system and religious beliefs of Arabia were among the grossest the world has ever known. Muhammad aroused the enthusiasm of his countrymen, gave them a purer form of religion, which acknowledged the existence of only one Supreme Being. The political progress—I employ the phrase in the sense in which Mr. Telang has employed it in

speaking of the Marathas—which the wandering Arabs, full of the enthusiasm inspired by a new religion, made in an incredibly short time, is one of the wonders related by history. Only decades sufficed to conquer territories which civilized Rome had required centuries to bring under her sway. But, unlike other conquering hordes, these people proved themselves amenable to civilization as they came into contact with different nations of different degrees of culture. There was a time when paganized Christianity placed a seal upon all knowledge, and suppressed all free inquiry. At that time the Muhammadans were among the most learned men in the world. They had conquered intellectual realms as rapidly as territorial ones. The older sciences were unearthed, translated and expounded, newer ones were discovered. The science of Astronomy was most successfully cultivated, and the foundation of Chemistry laid by them. They understood the science of agriculture and irrigation better than any nation. They had truer notions of the form of the earth. It was they who introduced the Indian Arithmetical Numeration. It was they who developed the science of Algebra. Their Princes collected great Libraries, and patronized men of letters and science, without any distinction of caste or creed, with a munificence which has been unsurpassed. They reared great cities and magnificent palaces. Little more than two centuries had elapsed since the death of the Founder of their faith when the

Augustan age of Saracenic literature commenced. In short, the naked fanatic barbarians of a former age had been rapidly transformed into the most polished and the most cultivated gentlemen that the world could then show. They were the repositories of every science and of every art, when the paganized Christianity and Civilization of the Roman Empire was stagnant and intolerant. They held the torch-light of knowledge at a time when everything would have been dead darkness, and but for them the modern world might not have achieved the degree of civilization that it has.

It is very hard to say if any great changes, any great upheavals in society have ever been brought about by mere mass education, of which the modern Hindu Social Reformers talk so much. Education of even the highest sort is powerless to achieve anything that is great, if the men who have been blessed with that education are constitutionally indolent, dreamy, speculative, timid, self-seeking, incapable of large sacrifices for the good of their race. Without requiring me to cite other instances from history, you will admit this proposition when you take time to reflect what is the sum—the fruit—of the high education which Hindus have received, and which is supposed to be an agency with which to fight successfully against social evils. You know that the result in social reform is disappointing. You know that for every one highly educated Hindu Reformer, twenty, thirty, obscure, ignorant men, men

who possibly may not have heard of even the very names of the Social Reform Associations or their educated leaders, come forward to suffer all the social consequences attendant upon their determination to act according to the law of reason and of justice, which is the law of God. To my mind, the essential difference between the Oriental and the Occidental races is that the first is indolent, dreamy, mystical and speculative, while the latter is in a superlative sense, active and self-reliant. And this difference explains, I think, the superiority of the second over the first. But M. Renan is not quite right, paradoxical and presumptuous as my remarks may appear, when he says that because the Oriental mind is speculative and is given to thinking upon things celestial, it is the less materialistic in a certain sense than the Occidental mind. Far from it. It is perfectly materialistic so far as things immediately at hand, and pertaining to itself alone, are concerned. Its want of enthusiasm is complete. It cannot, it will not, look far beyond into the future. It refuses to do anything the moment it has won its own comfort. Can it be that this condition of mind is the reason why the Oriental civilization, once so much in advance of the other, has been stationary during more than two thousand years? I merely suggest the question—I cannot pretend to solve it. But coming back to my proposition that education is powerless to achieve social or any other great reform if the men are wanting in courage to face

the consequences, I cannot help remarking it as worthy of your attention *that Mr. Telang has omitted to cite even a single historical instance* showing that mass education has achieved such a reform. The fact is, that in all the history of the world as at present known to us, there never was anything like mass education. Even at the present day, amongst almost all the civilized nations, there is no such thing. Again, just recollect what the education of the many means. It is only a little reading, writing, and arithmetic. The necessity of all great changes is thought out by only one or two great men which a particular society may have produced. It is only the influential men of that society, who are not talkers but workers, that carry out the suggested changes into practice, *without* waiting for the opinion of even the "educated" masses, if there be any such, who must as a matter of fact be absolutely incapable of judging in the matter. This is the case even in the most advanced democratic societies, as we daily observe. But in the case of India especially, to talk of waiting to commence Reform till education has leavened the masses, is, in honest words, to decline to move any muscle in the cause of truth, of justice, of reason, of morality, of true patriotism, lest we should lose our whole skins. Messrs. Chandavarkar and Dadabhai Naoroji, at least, talk honestly when they declare that, since we are to wait for education that shall have leavened the masses, it will take centuries to achieve Social

Reform. They are right when they say that Indian society is in its childhood. I myself acknowledge that every society has its stages of growth which can be no more passed over than those of man. But this proposition has its limitations. If a semi-civilized society is left to work out its own civilization, without any extraneous superior influences, it must take very long to do so. But when such influences are fortunately forthcoming at any stage of its progress, then, indeed, the progress is accelerated so much so, barring other unfavourable circumstances, such as the weak character of the nation, that the stages appear to have been overleapt. Even Hindu society, exceptionally stationary as it is, would not have been at this day what it is, were it not for the fortunate contact with Western civilization. Again, could we suppose that the English nation would have been what we see it to be, if the effete and divided Anglo-Saxon society of the 11th century had not been brought into contact by conquest with the Normans of France? We know that the immediate result of the Norman Conquest of England was misery and degradation, but in its far-reaching consequences, the conquest was a blessing and the making of a whole, undivided England. Speaking of our country, I am not prepared to deny that if the British Government last half-a-dozen centuries, we may see mass education quietly achieving reforms such as Mr. Malabari has no thought of proposing. But the Hindu

gentlemen who talk of centuries in excuse for not doing something practical themselves, must be of an exceptionally optimistic cast of mind. I am as strong an imperialist as any man can be. I yield to no one in my belief of the enormous strength which the British nation is able to put forth in times of great crises. But Mr. Chandavarkar will pardon me if I frankly tell him that his talk sounds to me much too Utopian. Strong as the British nation is, it is just possible that the vicissitudes of time may take away the sceptre from its hands, and place it into those of Russia, for instance. A great conflict with Russia for mastery over the East is now within the range of practical politics; so to say,—it is a question of time merely. I do not believe that England is then likely to lose a single inch of Indian land. Far from it. But the combination of circumstances, which time may bring about, may be too much for even mighty England to successfully contend against. What may happen, then God alone knows. It is probable that conquering Russia may have nothing to do with high education. It is probable that our country may be retarded, centuries back in every kind of progress, political included. These are chances—I have preferred to call them probabilities—which Mr. Chandavarkar has not taken into account.

The real reason of this unwillingness, this inability on the part of our educated reformers, is the want of strength of character, of enthusiasm, of patriotism, of

the right sort. And hence they are driven to talk cant. Such talk is not confined to one nation, to one sect, to Englishmen, or to Anglo-Indians. The Native critics are not exceptionally free from it when it comes to their turn to labour in the cause of truth, to offer great sacrifices for the good of their country. What eloquence, for instance, would not Mr. Telang have employed to meet the arguments of those Anglo-Indians who refuse to grant the country political privileges on the pretext that the masses of his country are unconscious that they have any rights as against their Government, or that they have no more heard of Mr. Telang and his friends representing them than they have heard of the Man in the Moon doing the same? And yet, when Mr. Telang is taxed with immovability in the matter of Social Reform, he, Mr. Telang himself, pleads, as one of the excuses, that the women of his race are not conscious of their slavery, of their misery, of their degradation. Has Mr. Telang, ever in his life, formed any opinion with respect to the emancipation of the slaves in America? What are his views? But I will not pursue this argument further when so accomplished a master of facts and controversial weapons—no other than Mr. Malabari himself—has already refuted Mr. Telang's proposition so admirably. I know that arguments of the sort of "unconscious slavery" and "least line-of resistance" are ever brought forward by those who are unwilling to set right that which is wrong. I know that such men

will show difficulties, which may be great enough in all conscience, to be immeasurably greater, so as to excuse their not putting their shoulders to the wheel in a practical sense to remove them. No man has a right to say that certain individuals are in an especial manner bound to do, in the common interests of their race, that which is the business of all in the community. But surely those individuals, whatever their merits, whatever their learning, cannot lay claim to true patriotism, to that patriotism of the highest and purest sort which consists in forgetting self, and making large sacrifices for the sake of emancipating their race from the enervating customs of centuries of priestcraft and ignorance. It is the talk of our educated Reformers, that the time has not yet come for doing what they are so eloquently preaching, that retards progress so much. My fears are that this talk on the part of the leaders of the community will ultimately prove fatal to the cause of reform. I know that our educated Reformers are inevitably led to take up this position to excuse their inaction and save their credit in the judgment of their English friends and foes. The fact, however, remains that their inaction is differently accounted for by the Hindu public. Of the many uncultivated or semi-educated Hindus with whom I talked on the subject, I do not recollect a single person who did not deplore the want of courage which has unfortunately characterized the educated sons of India in not doing themselves first what they preach. Hindus once always

pointed their finger to this Reformer and to that Reformer who had talked much and yet who had widowed daughters or sisters in his household or had already married his infant children. It is from the educated Hindus that reaction comes, and it is their ideas that are gradually imbibed by others who wanted decent excuses for not acting as religion and conscience bade. Honest and open-hearted Reformers like Mr. Chandavarkar have been driven by logic to such an extent that they declare that men like poor Karsondas Mulji have done a great deal of harm in setting the example of acting according to the dictates of reason and of justice, and refusing to adopt the "prudent" sophisms of the educated Reformers, that by acquiescing in what is wrong and sinful, and contrary to their own older and purer religion, and by remaining in their own community, they would exercise a better influence upon their castemen and ultimately bring on Reform. But even Mr. Chandavarkar and his friends do not go far enough in their logical conclusions. If, as they allege, time will come only centuries hence for practically enforcing their moral convictions in this matter—if Karsondas Mulji is to be blamed for prematurely doing what in the opinion of those gentlemen ought not to have been done, then, surely, these gentlemen are bound to look with disapproval upon every premature instance of the courage of putting the talk of Reform into practice. Well, let me ask, if whenever widow-marriages have taken place,

Mr. Chandavarkar's paper—the *Indu Prakash*—has written against those who happened to be guilty of the premature action so called?

I have, Sir, trespassed very much upon your space, and I must finish at once, though I had hoped to notice Mr. Telang's minor arguments. I owe you a thousand thanks for your patience in following me thus far.

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

R. N. CHHOY.

SAYADPURA GATE, SURAT,

April 4th 1886.

NOTE.

After the publication of the above letter, the Pamphlet containing a reprint of Mr. Telang's Lecture, with a prefatory Note added by the learned lecturer, was placed in my hands. As one or two arguments in Mr. Telang's Note bear an appearance of sufficient plausibility, and might be made much of by people holding his views, I cannot allow this opportunity to pass without subjecting them to at least a brief examination.

The critics of Mr. Telang's Lecture had objected to that gentleman's ignoring utterly the great Reformation which has proved the main cause of the general as well as the political progress of England directly, and of other countries indirectly. Mr. Telang in his turn charges his critics with being arbitrary in ignoring the political progress made by the English people in earlier times, without there having been a previous moral or religious reform in any sense corresponding to the Reformation. The critics of Mr. Telang, on the one hand, refer to a grand historical instance, and infer that true greatness is impossible for a nation sunk in

ignorance and barbarous superstition, and chained down by a thousand and one degrading social customs during centuries, while, on the other hand, Mr. Telang points to a period of political progress in the history of a nation when it had not had a previous religious or moral reform, and directly infers that political greatness is attainable without any such previous preparation necessarily. Here Mr. Telang seems to me to be hasty in his conclusion. For my part, I do not insist that at every step of political progress, however slight, history will show a previous moral or religious change. The real thing to see is the number and the enormity of the social distempers affecting a society. Can Mr. Telang give an instance, from all the history of the world, of a nation which was suffering from social cankers as Indian society is suffering at present, and which yet attained political greatness that served it as an instrument to get rid of them? I doubt it. *The question, after all, is a question of degree.* Again, why does Mr. Telang ignore the fact that exactly at the time when the Magna Charta was extorted, England had completely attained national unity, or, in other words, had done away with social inequalities? The Magna Charta was won precisely because the jealousy between the classes had been extinct, and the nation had become one social whole in all essential respects. It is exactly because such a condition of things is absent in India, that it has almost made no progress in any direction. It was exactly because the English people had attained this unity so early, and the Continental nations had not, that the English had centuries' start over those nations in political and general progress.

Is it not then highly illogical of Mr. Telang to insist upon an undefined degree of political progress as an instrument that would regenerate Hindu society, simply because there had been no moral or religious reform in England previous to the era of the Magna Charta and Simon de Montfort's Parliament? The essential circumstances which distinguish Indian society from the English society of the 13th Century are significantly ignored by Mr. Telang.

All wrangling about the question whether the required reform in Hindu society should be called moral or religious, or social, is a perfect waste of time. Let our educated Hindus endeavour in an honest spirit to understand the real conditions upon which true reform could be achieved. The Intellectual Emancipation and

the Political Emancipation of the masses of India, which are clung to by a certain class of our educated Hindus as the panacea of all evils, social, moral, religious, are pleasant dreams which are impossible to fulfil for centuries yet, and even under the best of circumstances. India will not be said to have taken the first step towards her regeneration until her sons shall have abandoned all talk, and entered upon practical work with true earnestness. Self should be forgotten. The true interests of the country, of justice, of humanity, of religion, should always be their aim. Large sacrifices are required. Without these, the country will ever remain in a hopeless condition. Excessive devotion to politics will not help the general interests of the country. Far from it. It will, on the contrary, mar them. Social reform should be practically carried out, and consequently far more attention should be paid to it than we have hitherto paid, and political agitation should be a secondary object.

Is it permissible to hope that our educated Hindus will understand the true conditions upon which genuine reform depends, and will, by their deeds, prove themselves worthy of the education they have received?



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